

Editor's Corner: *Third Stone Manifesto*

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“Bin-Ya. I intentionally emphasize the YA. Saying his name in this way forces me to keep my mouth open and breathe out air. Binya, whom I affectionately called my pumpkin, advocated for everyone to breathe and to breathe out full breaths. The kind of breath that reminds you of GOD’s love and the love all around. Binya exuded love even when he was flaming you on social media. His intensity was grounded in his love and fierce advocacy for love and staunch battle against anything that stood in its way. He fought for love so hard because he knew what a love deferred and a love denied felt like. He was able to see and experience love in words, images, sounds, faces, and places. He connected people all over the globe with love as his aim. During his more cogent moments, recently we pondered ways to link people throughout the Diaspora. Although not physically there, I hope in the midst of all of our sadness, we find a way to dance and smile and write and draw and build and create. Binya would want us to come together and celebrate and discover and find and explore our entire selves with mouths open to breathe out and take in full breaths. AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH.” (May 30, 2019, Binyavanga Wainaina Memorial, Nairobi National Museums, Botanical Gardens)

The above was read during the memorial service of my dear friend and “Pumpkin,” Binyavanga Wainaina. In several of his tributes, he was described as being an Afofuturist (Binyavanga Wainaina Archive, 2019). This first issue is dedicated to Binya not because he was or would even ascribe the term. It is dedicated to him because he was committed to expanding the ways in which people throughout the diaspora lived, created, built, produced, imagined, and simply were. Similarly, *Third Stone* was conceived as a space and a place for people of color throughout the Diaspora to breathe out and take in full breaths.

The term *Afofuturism*, coined by Mark Dery (1994), is problematic to some for a plethora of reasons. I don’t like using the word *problem*, as *challenge* has in its meaning resistance and overcoming. Problems need to be fixed, and challenges must be overcome. See, the very notion of Africa is ascribed to a place that is the source of all human and possibly other kind. The place we now call Africa was given its name by others (Mudimbe, 1988). It is not the name from those within the space. See, using “Afro” in the term is at the core of the challenge. Then there is also a challenge with this idea of, “future.” How is future being defined and by whom? Black people are FANTASTIC, which transcends time, space and all matter. We aim to celebrate all modes of the Black Fantastic!

Yet, I would be naïve if I did not acknowledge the power in terms and ascribed labels. Formation, and group formation, is an integral part of resistance. It is important that the challenges with the label *Afofuturism* be acknowledged. *Third Stone* is a space for truth-telling and, truth be told, we, too, have problems with the term, which is why it is not the title yet is in the verbiage as a descriptor.

The genesis of the idea was the creation of a platform to demonstrate digital humanities by selecting a subject matter apropos to the “discipline.” Seretha Williams and I connected last summer, as her daughter attended a conference at Columbia University. We saw this as an opportunity to extend digital humanities, yet another problematic ascribed name. *Third Stone* is our quest to extend the distribution of things for Us, by Us, and about Us, with Us being an inclusive term inviting like-minded people to the space. Jeffrey Renard Allen suggested the term *Third Stone*

while we were brainstorming a title for the space that was inclusive but also grounded in a historical trajectory. Moreover, “Third Stone from the Sun” is the title of a Jimi Hendrix song on the album, *Are You Experienced* (1967), and serves as a cultural touchstone demarcating the historical trajectory of this space.

Afrofuturism as a subject matter predates the existence of the term coined by Dery in the 1990s. Oral histories from slaves demonstrate that part of their existence and hope was their investment in a life trajectory communicating, creating, and imagining their past, present, and future. Imagination is at the core of Afrofuturism, which injects activism by advocating for the removal of all obstacles that seek to stifle or silence people of African descent, their imagination, and things produced as a result.

Ironically, the launch of Ryan Coogler’s *Black Panther* and its ultimate success brought Afrofuturism, or what English and Kim (2013) describe as neo-Afrofuturism, to the mainstream. *Black Panther*, the comic and subsequent film, was conceived by two men not of immediate African descent, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. If all humans derived from Africa, we are all of African descent; it is the immediacy of your lineage, which I would argue has impact. But I digress and want to stay focused on the journal or rather the space, as the word *journal* is also a challenge, as it conjures pages and formats that we hope to transcend, extend, and move beyond. Concerned about where this media concern with “Afrofuturism” could lead, we launched *Third Stone* to place a stake somewhere (I won’t say in the sand), as our aim is to participate in a space that is both inclusive and expansive. Some of the objectives of *Third Stone* include to:

- Provide multimodal content
- Serve as a hub for Black DH, “e-black studies,” “digital Blackness”
- Promote public history and humanities
- Build networks of scholars, practitioners, and activists
- Create an epistemological meeting space for Black liberation
- Advocate for the rights of digital authors and creators
- Influence pedagogy, curricula, and canon

Just as *Soul Train* welcomed everyone “aboard for an absolutely mind-blowing voyage,” we invite you to join us in this space and place devoted to modes of the Black Fantastic.

References

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